

MCA Webinars
Promoting health throughout the life-course during the
COVID-19 pandemic series

2. Promoting Healthy Ageing in the COVID-19 era.

Background

Older people with pre-existing health conditions are at an increased risk of getting an infection with high severity and mortality. The weak immune system makes it harder for the elderly to fight against the infection. Loneliness, neglect, isolation, lack of physical activity and poor nutrition due to a restricted environment make them vulnerable. The second webinar in the series was focused on Promoting Healthy Ageing in the COVID-19 era.

A baseline report for the decade of healthy ageing, physical activity, nutritional adequacy, and meaningful engagement for elder people was presented.

Objective

The webinar was aimed to understand the ways to strengthen immunity by nutrition and exercise amongst the older adults as well as enhancing meaningful engagement in a restricted environment. The knowledge and strategies will help to promote healthy ageing in the COVID-19 era.

Presentations

1. Promoting Healthy Ageing in old age: A preview of the World Health Organization's Baseline Report of the Decade of Healthy Ageing
2. Physical activity for health promotion in a restricted environment
3. Ensuring nutritional adequacy for health and well-being during the period of restricted availability
4. Meaningful engagement for older people during the restricted living situation

Technical resources

	Coordinators	Moderator	Presenters
1	Dr Neena Raina, Senior Adviser MCA, SEARO	Dr A.B. Dey, Professor and Head, Department of Geriatric Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi	Dr Ritu Sadana, Unit Head (Acting), Ageing and Health, Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health, and Ageing, WHO, Geneva
2	Dr Dileep Mavalankar, Director IIPH Gandhi Nagar		Dr Sanjay Wadhwa, Professor, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, AIIMS, New Delhi
3			Dr Angela de Silva, Regional Adviser, Nutrition and Health for Development, WHO-SEARO, New Delhi
4			Dr Prasun Chatterjee, Associate Professor, Department of Geriatric Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi

Participants

The target audience was program officers from ministries of health, professionals like geriatric specialists, nurses, academics, technical officials from the UN, and other partners. Invites were sent to 2270 participants, 275 registered and 172 attended.

Summary

Dr Neena Raina SA-MCA delivered the welcome address and introduction to the webinar series and importance of healthy ageing during the COVID times. Dr Dileep Mavalankar highlighted the collaboration and details of IIPH and courses being offered.

The event was moderated by Dr A.B. Dey, Head of the Department of Geriatrics, AIIMS, New Delhi.

Dr Ritu Sadana presented a baseline report for the decade of healthy ageing. She highlighted that the World Health Assembly this year has endorsed the action plan of healthy ageing. The main findings from the national survey was shared. The total of 42 out of 194 countries have comparable data on healthy ageing. The national survey represents 64% of the world's older adults (60 years and above). The analysis of functional ability (difficulty in dressing, managing money, getting medication) shows that as age increases fewer elders have their basic needs met, and after age 80 women have lesser ability to do so. Dr Ritu emphasized as adults do not meet the basic need, the issue needs to be addressed strongly. Using pathways given in the survey report, countries can learn from each other on activities to address elderly health issues across the countries.

Dr Sanjay Wadhwa, discussed the important role of physical activity in promoting health, recovery, rehabilitation, and disability limitation. He presented the WHO's six global recommendations for 65 years and above. Dr Sanjay Wadhwa concluded that 5Es should be remembered. First is to **evaluate** the individual for any contraindication for exercise, then **educate** or **explain** the component of exercise, **equip** the individual with equipment in terms of equipment for exercise, footwear, etc. and **enable** the person and finally **empower** the person so the individual does not remain dependent on you or others.

Dr Angela de Silva discussed that the healthy ageing process span the entire life course passes through child age, adolescence, and old age but exercise and diet at in early age has an impact on healthy ageing. Chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases have huge dietary influences. Until recently very little attention was paid to elderly nutrition and diet, but in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2, attention was given to the nutrition of older people. The WHO document on "Integrated care for older people" recommends oral supplementation of nutrition for older people affected by undernutrition depending upon an individual's assessment. She shared the

recommendations for supporting a healthy diet of older persons. It includes: increase awareness of caregivers on nutrition needs for older people, advocacy to stakeholders for the importance of diet and healthy ageing, capacity building of health care providers, Improvement of the food environment, and nutritional social protection including food support to prevent vulnerability.

Dr Prasun Chatterjee discussed the various indirect impact on older people due to home isolation. Multiple studies have shown that self-determined activity with appropriate support is the best option to achieve successful ageing. Individuals or health caregivers have to plan how to engage ourselves and seniors at home which is enjoyable and doable e.g. gardening, painting, etc. leisure-based activities like playing, doing puzzles, brain games like sudoku, gardening can be practiced without any risk of COVID and should be promoted.

The session was interactive and captured many questions which was addressed by the respective panelists.

Dr Neena Raina concluded that healthy ageing is linked to the life course and behaviors initiated during adolescence influence the health of older adults like smoking, diet and physical activity etc. Multisector involvement is required to support and implement healthy ageing programme in countries. We must ensure that all sectors are involved to support elderly specially during COVID 19. Lack of data and information precludes advocacy for increased investments for program support. Age desegregated data beyond 60 years on chronic diseases, NCD including other indicators during various survey can be helpful and this subset analysis should be encouraged. She shared a vote of thanks to all the panelists and moderator Dr A.B. Dey. The webinar ended at 14:30 hrs IST.